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ABSTRACT

A licensed counselor working in a privately owned mental health facility implemented a practicum study designed to improve the parenting skills and quality of family communication in families with children between 3 and 14 years of age. Practicum goals were to: (1) give parents information that would improve their parenting skills; and (2) increase cooperative interaction among participating family members. A survey was administered to potential class members to determine what communication and parenting skills were of concern to them. Based on these expressed needs, a parenting class was developed. Practicum evaluation data indicated positive changes in the quality of family communication. Parents significantly improved in parenting skills. Survey instruments are appended. A total of 34 references are cited. (RH)

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Developing and Instituting A Parenting Course for Parents of Children Ages 3 through 14 Years

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NOVA UNIVERSITY

Developing and Instituting A Parenting Course for Parents of Children Ages 3 through 14 Years

by

Ruth S. Innes

Cluster XVII

A Practicum II Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program
in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1990

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ABSTRACT

Developing and Instituting a Parenting Course. Innes, Ruth S., 1990: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Child Rearing Parenting Skills Parent Education Parent Workshop.

This practicum was designed to improve the parenting skills and the quality of family communication in families with children between the ages of 3 through 14 years.

The writer administered a survey to potential class members to determine what communication/parenting skills were of concern to the parents. The writer developed a parenting class based on the expressed needs.

The results of the practicum were positive. Analysis of the data indicated that there were positive changes in the quality of family communication and that the parents significantly improved their parenting skills.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Description of the Community

This practicum took place in a private counseling agency located in an urban community of approximately 275,000 people. The community is located in the Southeastern United States and is considered a desirable place not only in which to live, but also as a place to vacation.

The economic structure is primarily tourism, banking and soft industry. Over the past 30 years the area has experienced extensive economic growth and the population base has become both younger and larger. The community recently celebrated its centennial and the city fathers predicted continued economic prosperity.

There are substantial minority group representations in the population. Blacks, Hispanics and Orientals are the primary minorities. While race relations appear fairly positive at this time, a considerable percentage of the above mentioned minorities represent the welfare population. Economically, Blacks and Hispanics comprise 70% of those considered living at poverty level.

A variety of family structures are represented within this community. Single parent families comprise 37% of all present family structures. Single teenage mothers and their children represent 52% of all single family structures. The majority of these teenage mothers are Black or Hispanic. Economically, most are a part of the lower socio-economic class. Divorce statistics indicate that 62% of all families have experienced one or more divorces. Child abuse and neglect information indicate that the average number of calls per week to Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS) is 64.

There are a variety of services within the community which focus on families and their needs. Private agencies are abundant with fees for services ranging from $30 per session to $120 per session. Family Services, HRS and religious institutions have counseling services which are available to all regardless of their ability to pay. Child care services available in the community range from privately owned centers to state controlled facilities. Private day care facilities cater primarily to the business and professional class. The demand for reasonable day care with a sliding scale fee structure far greatly exceeds the available spaces. Public facilities indicated that there are a considerable number of children on "waiting lists".

Shelters for special population are available on a limited basis. There is one spouse abuse center servicing

30 people. A shelter for runaway adolescents has a capacity of 25. There are two homes for pregnant single women. Each of these two homes have a capacity of 20 women.

The Writer's Work Setting

The counseling agency in which this practicum occurred is a privately owned mental health facility. It has been in existence for nine years and presently has a professional staff of five and a clerical staff of two. There are approximately 70 clients that are seen during each week in individual sessions. The office is opened Monday through Thursday and the therapists are available from 9 a.m. through 8 p.m. The services offered are individual counseling, child, adolescent, family counseling, biofeedback, and sex therapy. Groups are held throughout the year. These groups address specific issues and are offered when there appears to be a need (i.e., client request and/or counselor determination). Groups this year have been held that address stress, study skills, parenting, and divorce adjustment.

The majority of the clients are from the business and professional community. They represent the upper middle to upper socio-economic class. Professionals that refer clients to the agency include physicians, attorneys, schools, nurses, journalists, and several clergymen. The agency works with a large community church on a consulting basis.

Fees for services are set, but there is a sliding scale for those who demonstrate need. There is a budget sheet that clients must complete if they request reduced fees. This agency is privately owned, and hence, is not funded by the community United Way or with state funds. Most insurance plans are accepted but Medicard and Medicare are not.

The agency is owned by a clinical psychologist who is fully licensed by the state. The professional staff includes: 1). two clinical psychologists, 2). one licensed mental health counslor, 3). one biofeedback therapist who is also a registered nurse, and 4). one marriage and family therapist who is working toward licensure in the state. The clerical staff consists of two secretary/receptionists. They schedule clients, collect fees, file insurance forms and type.

The Writer's Role and Responsibilities

The writer is a licensed mental health counslor whose clients consist primarily of families, individual adolescents and children. The writer organizes groups that address family issues (parent/child interactions, effective parenting), personal growth, and divorce adjustment.

The writer's academic preparation includes a Bachelor of Science in history and social studies, with certification in history, social studies and English. She has a Master of Arts degree in Sociology, and another Master of Arts degree

in counslor education. The writer has an Educational Specialist degree in counselor education and is certified in guidance and counseling for grades Kindergarten through Junior College. She is a licensed mental health counselor and has taught in college as well as having worked as a social worker. She has been an associate at the counseling center for seven years.

Chapter II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Description of the Problem Situation

Six months prior to the development of this course, the counseling agency had experienced a significant increase in the number of referrals and inquiries concerning services available for parent/child interaction problems. At the same time, the pastor of a large local church expressed concern about the number of what he termed "ineffective families". His concern focused on the rising demand for pastoral counseling requested by families in the church. He indicated that the families were at a loss as to how to deal with their children and that it appeared that their parenting skills were ineffective or non-existent.

Counslors from three private schools, expressed a desire to have the agency offer a parenting class. They indicated that they were dealing with a considerable number of family issues and that both the schools and the families would benefit from such a class.

In assessing the problem situation, it appeared that parents and children were not communicating positively, that the children were acting out in ways that were dysfunctional to them and to the family, and that the parents were asking

for guidelines on parenting. If the problems were solved there would be positive parent/child communication; cooperation between parents and children would occur (replacing conflict) and parents would learn and practice positive parenting skills.

The problem was that negative interaction was occuring between parents and children, creating a dysfunctional family that did not meet the needs of the children or parents.

Problem Documentation

The evaluation of counseling referrals made to the agency six months prior to the development of the practicum, indicated that 40 of the 90 referrals were for families experiencing crises. These crises focused on poor interaction among family members. Negative family communication was expressed as the primary concern. This communication was perceived as being destructive to all family members. During the same six month period the agency received a total of 50 calls inquiring as to whether a parenting class was available. The majority of the inquiries involved families with one or more children over the age of three.

The pastoral staff of a large local church indicated that the majority of their counseling over the past six months was done with families concerned about communication and parenting skills. 85% of the families had children over

the age of three years. The senior pastor indicated to the writer that there was an expressed need for a parenting class. He had received 40 inquiries within a two month period. It was indicated that the church wanted to develop a parenting class that would become a part of their educational program. The senior pastor wanted the class to be developed by and taught by professional counselors.

The counselors from three private schools in the community contacted the writer concerning the possibility of developing a class addressing parenting skills. They indicated that there were many inquiries by parents concerning such a class, and that the three schools desired to jointly sponsor one. It was indicated to the writer that negative family interactions significantly interferes with the academic achievement of the students. They expressed a concern over the apparent lack of effective parenting skills present in a significant number of families.

Causative Analysis

The problem of negative parent/child interaction has several possible causes. Information obtained in interviews held with parents indicated that there was a lack of understanding by the parents as to the needs of their children. These unmet needs were specified as psychological and emotional. Conversly, the parents appeared confused and upset, perceiving that their children

were being unreasonable in terms of the demands placed upon them (parents).

The stresses and demands of life in the late 1980's and the early 1990's felt by both parents and children has created a situation where old problem solving skills are inappropriate. The family is dealing with a variety of cultural changes that affect not only the roles of the parents but also the expectations that society has for the family. The emphasis on mobility, economic and social achievement and the elusive search for happiness has had the effect of shifting the focus from the family unit to the individual. This, coupled with the broad range of acceptable behavior for both parents and children in our society has placed a great amount of strain on the already fragile nuclear family. The presence of many options and the lack of many absolutes (in terms of behavioral expectations) for both parents and children has created a need to assess traditional parenting styles and adapt them to the needs of the family in the 1990's.

Literature Review

Parenting styles as an important component of parent/child interaction has been addressed by several researchers. Montemayor (1986) suggested that parenting styles effect the degree (or lack of) parent/child conflicts. He has identified communications styles, problem solving skills and techniques of family management as

critical topics. The manner in which one's family experiences influence a person's parenting skills was addressed by Killman and Rosenfeld (1983). They indicate that parents often assume that because of their experiences in their families of orientation they are qualified to be effective parents. In reality, parents in today's American Society need training to effectively deal with the issues with which children are confronted. While verbal communication is of great importance in parenting, Panofsky (1986) indicates that non verbal interactions affect a child's behavior and that parents need to be trained so that they understand how their non verbal communication is interpreted by the child.

Parenting skills are often assumed to be present as soon as a person becomes a parent. Boger and Smith (1986) indicate that this assumption is present in our society. While this myth abounds, the mobile, nuclear family of today does not have the opportunity for the development of parenting skills that was present in the family of two or three generations ago. Indeed, Steinberg (1987) discussed the issue of parent child communication indicated that today's parent is not "naturally" prepared to deal with the demands that society places on children. He stated that today's society emphasizes the conflictual side of parent/child relationships rather than the fact that natural changes in relationships are occurring. He stated that

through appropriate training the changing relationships can be positively perceived by both parents and children and that conflict can be avoided.

Mussen (1982) believes that parents must consciously work at the development of positive, effective parenting skills. He indicates that all parenting techniques influence the child's development of pro-social behavior. These techniques include: modeling, demonstration, material rewards, praise and approval, giving or withholding love, explanation, lecturing, corporal punishment and psychological punishment. The importance of consiously developing techniques of parenting is also reintorced by Chapman (1979). He states that parents need to be trained as to how to guide their children so that they (the children) can deal with the freedom given them in today's society and <u>still</u> conform to the broad patterns of life.

Hersh (1979) referred to the demands that the present social order places on the family. He indicated that various social changes are influencing the family structure, roles and all the individuals involved in this social institution. There is a necessity for change in the traditional parenting styles if society is to meet the needs of today's children. Dangel and Polster (1988) reflected this necessity for change in parenting styles. They supported the parent education indicating that parents are raising children under substantially different social

situations and that many are questioning both the goals and techniques of parenting. The parent education is discussed as an effective program which is presently in its second decade as a program. The success of these programs is addressed by Demo et al. (1987). A study of parents enrolled in training classes has indicated that parents and children gained insight as to how each perceive the other and that parenting groups that include the children can be quite effective. Roehl (1985) reinforced this concern about the changing family structure and the effects of inadequate parenting skills on the family members. The need for more direct educational opportunities focusing on the American family is emphasized.

Arcus (1987) addressed the importance of family life education in assisting families to function positively. This article emphasizes the importance of developing programs that are comprehensive, life span family education courses. Scattergood (1986) described a similar need but addressed it from the children's perspective. This approach focuses on teaching school-aged children the skills necessary to be caring and effective in family relationships. Both of the above authors have emphasized the need for family education programs in order to have effective, functioning families in our complex society.

Chapter III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The following goals were projected for this practicum:

1. Parents will acquire accurate information about parenting in the 1990's. This knowledge will improve their parenting skills.

2. Parents and children will interact in a manner that will reflect cooperation rather than conflict.

Behavioral Expectations

There were two behavioral expectations anticipated as a result of this practicum:

1. Parents will acquire parenting skills that will result in more accurate and better knowledge about parenting in the 1990's.

2. Family communication will improve and cooperation will replace conflict.

Measurement of Objectives

The above two expectations were measured in the following manner.

Expectation I - All parents will demonstrate content mastery at the 80% level on an inventory addressing parenting skills. The parenting inventory was given to the

participants during the first session. They had 20 minutes to complete it. The purpose of this inventory was to assess the parenting skills of the participants. The results were tabulated. Table 1 indicates the responses:

Table 1

Parenting Survey:

Pre Practicum Responses

Issue Addressed (a)	Pre Practicum Results (b)		
1. Developmental theories	5 yes 30 no		
2. Theories known	4 Piaget 2 Kohlberg		
3. Logical consequences	6 appropriate 2 not approp. 27 don't know		
	agree	disagree	don't know
4. Spanking	8	6	21
5. Behavioral limits	1	9	25
6. Praise and encouragement	10	5	20
7. Peer groups	21	4	10
8. Limits and children	20	5	10
9. Mutual respect	6	8	21
10. Control issues	3	2	30
11. Self esteem	5	0	30

(a) by question from survey (see Appendix B)
(b) total number responding = 35

The intended overall results predicted a change so that participants would increase their knowledge of parenting skills to the 80% level.

This inventory was to be administered again at the end of the practicum. The results were to be tabulated and compared with the results of the inventory administered during the first session.

Expectations II - Families will develop better communication skills and more cooperation. There will be a 80% positive change in the communication skills as a result of this practicum. A survey addressing the perceived levels of communication in each family was given to the participants during the first class session. The results were tabulated. Table 2 indicates the responses. The parents had 20 minutes in which to complete it.

Table 2

Parent/Child Communication

Pre Practicum Responses

Issue Addressed (a)	Pre Practicum Results (b)
1. Family discussions	2 yes
2. Frequency	2 overwhelmed
3. Why not	3 not necessary 30 impossible
4. Communication quality	2 positive 28 arguments 4 silence 1 good/bad
5. Discussions	4 one person 28 never made 3 coercive
6. Children and decision making	2 yes 33 no
7. Quality type of communication	5 needs considerable improvement 30 poor

(a) by question from survey (see Appendix C)
(b) total responding = 35

This survey was to be administered again at the end of the practicum and the results were to be tabulated and compared with the results of tabulated after the first administration of the survey.

Rational for Use of the Survey

The evaluation instrument selected for this practicum was the survey. This form of evaluation is used extensively in education because of the wide range of educational

problems that can be addressed (Borg and Gall, 1983). The changes in parenting skills and communication levels were measured by assessing the parents' opinions concerning their knowledge and behavior prior to the practicum and after the implementation of the practicum. Aiken (1976) has indicated that one measures opinion by the use of surveys in which the population responds to specific questions on issues. This practicum assessed the opinion of parents as to their understanding of parenting skills and as to the level of communication present in each individual family.

The surveys developed were:

a. A questionnaire for parents addressing parents skills.

b. A questionnaire for parents addressing levels of family communication.

c. A survey listing topics for discussion and exploration in the parenting class.

Chapter IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Possible Solutions

Developing better parenting skills and parent/child interaction has been a topic of interest to both researchers and practitioners. The development of parenting groups and the technique of encouraging the children as well as the parents to become involved in training sessions has become a subject of inquiry in recent years. Several researchers view this participation as being not only worthwhile, but necessary if one is to effectively address the issues of parent/child communication. Demo et al. (1987) have indicated that this type of group has the potential to more effectively deal with the issues that generally block family communication rather than the traditional parent group and/or the separate child group. Coufal and Brock (1984) see this model as enhancing the quality of parent/child relationships.

Boger and Smith (1986) discuss the needs of today's parents and suggest that the development of parenting groups for new parents as well as for parents of older children would be effective. They propose the use of involved professionals and experienced parent volunteers to assist in

providing a foundation for the development of positive parent/child communication early; i.e., as soon as the parent becomes a parent. Parenting groups are necessary in today's world because of the changing nature of society and the demands placed on the nuclear family.

The importance of using education as a means of improving parenting skills and parent/child (i.e., family) interactions has been addressed. Fine (1979) and Roehl (1985) indicate that parent education programs are necessary (not optional) for today's parents. With the demands placed on them, alternate life styles acceptable, and the tenuousness of established truths parents are confused about how to raise their children. Killman (1983) reinforces this belief and suggestion. The changes in our post industrial society, the parenting skills that are now outdated due to these changes, and the presence of many options concerning behavior in our society have created a situation where parent education should be required, not optional. Educational programs should be developed for today's parent, dealing with the issues that the family structure is facing and will face as we move into the 1990's.

Selected Solution

The selected solution to this identified need was the development of a parenting group. This group was developed to address parenting skills and family communication issues. The focus was on families with children between the ages of

3 and 14. This age span was selected as a result of the compilation of the ages of children in the families referred for counseling over the past six months.

This option was selected for several reasons:

1. It would best fit in with the existing educational programs of the church.

2. The parents indicated great interest and enthusiasm for such a group.

3. The course could be used in a variety of settings; i.e., it could be adapted to schools, community centers and counseling agencies.

It is important to note that it was clarified with the pastoral staff that the class would not have a Christian emphasis. It specifically would address parenting and communication skills from an objective, counseling perspective.

The use of a mentoring program and the development of a child centered group was explored. However, the development of a workable solution utilizing these dimensions was not feasible for this setting.

Report of Action Taken

Planning the Parenting Class

A notice about the upcoming parenting class was placed in the weekly church newsletter for four weeks, three months prior to the planned first class session. Parents responded to this notice and a total of 63 people expressed interest.

The potential class members were administered a survey that addressed possible topics to be discussed in the class. The responses were tabulated. Table 3 indicates the responses:

Table 3

Parent Survey

Issue addressed (a)	Results (b)
1. Participation	52 yes 11 no
2. Topics:	
Inappropriate behavior	51
Stages of development	52
Changes in society	50
Emotional and psychological needs of parents	55
Communication	54
Discipline	61
Emotional and psychological needs of children	46
Peer relationships	48
Demands of work and parenting	40
Preparing for adolescence	30

(a) by question from survey (see Appendix C)
(b) total number responding = 63

The top issues that emerged were:

a. Developmental stages

b. Emotional and psychological needs of parents

c. Communiction

d. Discipline

Sixty-four people had indicated interest in the class. The writer had planned to have no more than 35 participants in the class. When the class time and dates were announced at the preliminary session (held two months prior to the first scheduled class meeting) 20 of the original people could not attend because of other commitments. With 20 dropping out, there were still eight more than the maximum allowable number. A letter that explained this dilemma was sent to all the paticipants (see Appendix D). It was indicated that the course would be repeated after the completion of the original course. As a result, eight more indicated that they would take it the second time. The total number in the course was 35. There were 12 couples and 11 single people. In the single group eight were women and three were men.

Planning the Course

Once the topics were determined, the writer then commenced the planning of the course content. This part of the practicum took two months. A curriculum was developed that included the following:

1. Developmental stages - Havinghurst, Piaget, Kohlberg, and Maslow
2. Emotional and psychological needs of parents - relating to child rearing
3. The emotional and psychological needs of children
4. Discipline - inappropriate behavior

5. Communication - parent to parent and parent to child

The course was designed to last for seven months, with 16 meetings. It was scheduled to begin in the fall and continue through early spring. The rationale for this was that it would be in sequence with much of the school year. It was concluded that family issues involving children are usually exacerbated when school is in session. More demands are placed on the family during the school year.

A second rationale for this time sequence was related to family plans. Generally summer is less predictable. It was felt that if the class were started in the summer there would be less regular attendance. Since attendance was to be mandatory this would complicate the class.

During the two month planning period, arrangements were made for the class location and the acquisition of two Master's level college students to function as assistants. The writer contacted the counslor education department of the local state university. A meeting was set up with the chairperson of the department and the writer. The counslor education department was most cooperative. Arrangements were made so that the students participation would be considered a required internship. Hence, they would receive college credit for this. Four candidates were interviewed. The two that were chosen were assessed as being empathetic, outgoing and flexible. Both were females. One was 28 and

the other was 31. Their roles would be to facilitate discussion when the group "broke down" into three subgroups and to contribute to each session in accordance with their expertise.

Parenting Class

The first session was devoted to getting acquinted, explaining the goals and the completion of two surveys. A goals sheet was handed out (see Appendix E) and a brief discussion followed. There appeared at first to be some apprehension among some members. Their concern focused on how much they would have to divulge during the process of the class. Once the goals sheet was distributed and interaction began, their concerns were alleviated.

The second through fifth sessions focused on developmental stages. Specifically emphasis was placed on the age category 3-14 years of age. However, an overview of all levels was given. The theories of Piaget, Havinghurst, Kohlberg and Maslow were presented. Homework was given. They were to assess where their children were in accordance with the theories and then report at the fifth session.

The participants at first appeared somewhat reluctant to spend time on "theory". There was expressed interest in knowing about developmental stages (see results of survey p46) but actually studying them elicited a more negative response. However, there appeared to be a change as the theories were explained. The theories were related to

actual life, and the participants began to identify where their children were in terms of each theory. This led to a better understanding of why children act as they do at certain ages. Emphasis was placed on age appropriate behavior and the importance of allowing children to be children.

Sessions six and seven were scheduled to concentrate on the emotional and psychological needs of parents in relation to child rearing. Because of the great interest and needs expressed by the participants this section continued for one half of session eight. Discussion focused on self esteem: what it is and how one can get it. A "self esteem checklist" was given (see appendix F). The participants self scored this. This information was not shared by the group.

These sessions addressed how the parent's perception of self influences how they relate to their children. The participants were most interested in this. Many related how they can now understand why their children react to them as they do. The participants began to identify their feelings and perceptions of the world. This discussion continued into the next session.

The "perfect parent" syndrome was presented and discussed. Definition of the "good parent" was examined. It was concluded that "a good" parent is not a "perfect" parent. The importance of examining one's emotional and

psychological needs and how they are reflected in parenting was discussed. At the conclusion of this unit, rational emotive therapy was intoduced. A brief guide to perceptions and feelings was handed out (see appendix G). The class shared many self-disclosures at this point.

The needs of children were discussed for one and a half sessions (sessions 8 1/2-9).The importance of setting limits for children and of being consistent in terms of expectations was emphasized. Mutual respect and the effects of unconditional positive regard were discussed. A lot of discussion was held on the topic of mutual respect and unconditional positive regard. The general reaction was "I never thought of it that way," or "I guess I can't expect more of my children than I do of myself." The assignments focused on being as nice to family members as one is to casual friends.

Discipline was the topic of the next three sessions. The difference between punishment and discipline was dicussed as was the importance of developing a sense of personal responsibility for behavior. The participants did not believe that putting the responsibility for behavior back on the child would work. A discussion of different levels of responsibility for different age groups ensued. Letting go of the notion that parents must always be in control of behavior was discussed. All appeared to have some concern with this. The participants were given

explicit assignments. This involved practicing at least three times the letting go of this control and involving the children in the discipline process. Age appropriate expectations were explained.

The participants came to the first class on communication with a revelation: Many had successfully practised the new approach to discipline. There was a significant amount of success. Slowly it appeared that the participants were beginning to really believe that this new idea would work. Because of the sharing, the 13th class session was divided between discipline and communication.

The communication classes explored what types of communication were occurring at home. Sessions 13 through 15 covered family communication. Role playing was used with one parent playing the child and the other taking the parent role. Evaluation of the communication styles were given (i.e., guilt producing, manipulation, honesty, anger). The participants were very interested in this exercise and gained a lot of valuable information as to what type of communication was occurring. Communication "traps" were discussed, and participants were asked to identify their particular trap or traps.

Communication on a honest and objective level was the topic of the last session on communication. The participants were divided into three groups. Discussion focusing on what is objective as opposed to subjective

communication and the importance of family meetings were discussed. The participants indicated a great deal of enthusiasm for this section of the course.

The final session was a "wrap up". This included retaking both surveys and discussing the value of the course to them from a personal perspective.

Chapter V

RESULTS

Upon completion of the implementation of this practicum, data was collected, evaluated and compared. The following results were noted:

1. The parents enrolled in the parenting course received training in how to parent effectively in the 1990's. This training increased their knowledge of parenting techniques. This was reflected in the data compiled from the questionnaire given to the class members (see Appendix A). It was given prior to the implementation of the course and repeated at the conclusion of the course.

Results of the parent pre and post questionnaire indicate a substantial change in the knowledge of positive parenting techniques. The number of parents using logical consequences as a way to deal with misbehavior went from 6 out of 35 prior to implementation to 34 out of 35 after implementation. Spanking as an appropriate discipline technique for children between the ages of three to eight went from eight prior implementation to zero. The "don't know" category in relation to spanking went from 21 prior implementation to two post implementation.

The category of "don't know" decreased significantly on the post implementation administration of the questionnaire. In all but one category the post implementation results under "don't know" was zero. Table 4 enumerates the parents responses:

Table 4

Comparison of the Parenting Survey Pre and Post Implementation (a)

Issue Addressed		Response (b)	Pre	Post
1. Developmental theories		yes	5	35
		no	30	0
2. Theories known		Piaget	4	35
		Kohlberg	2	35
		Maslow	0	35
		Havinghurst	0	35
3. Logical consequences		appropriate	6	34
		not appropriate	2	1
		don't know	27	0
		agree--disagree--don't know		
4. Spanking	pre	8	6	21
	post	34	1	0
5. Behavioral limits	pre	1	9	25
	post	20	15	0
6. Praise and encouragement	pre	10	5	20
	post	5	30	0
7. Peer groups	pre	21	4	10
	post	2	33	0
8. Limits and children	pre	20	5	10
	post	35	0	0
9. Mutual respect	pre	6	8	21
	post	32	3	0
10. Control issues	pre	3	2	30
	post	35	0	0
11. Self esteem	pre	5	0	30
	post	30	5	0

(a) responses to questionnaire in Appendix A
(b) total number responding in both pre and post = 35

2. A change in communication skills and the development of more cooperation in families was indicated by the parents. This was reflected in the data compared from the second questionnaire that was given to the class participants pre and post implementation of the course

The results of the parent/child communication questionnaire indicated that there was substantial perceived increase in positive parent/child communication. Pre implementation responses indicated that 2 out of 33 participants represented had family discussions that included all members! Post implementation responses indicated that 28 out of 35 were holding family discussions with all members present.

Their perceived quality of communication in the family changed significantly. Pre implementation results indicated that 2 out of 35 participants evaluated their family communication as positive, with 28 out of 35 indicating that arguments and disagreements generally occurred. Post implementation results indicated that 26 out of 35 participants evaluated the communication level as being positive, with 3 out of 35 indicating that arguments and disagreements continue to occur.

Pre implementation results indicated that 0 out of 35 participants felt that communication was good and 30 out of 35 perceived it as poor and essentially non existent. Post implementation results indicated that 27 out of 35

participants felt that communication was good, while 0 out of 35 evaluated it as poor and non existent.

Table 5 enumerates each response pre and post. As is indicated there were significant changes in communication after implementation.

Table 5

Comparison of Parent/Child Communication Pre and Post Implementations (a)

Issue Addressed	Response (b)	Pre	Post
1. Family discussions	yes	2	28
	no	33	7
2. Frequency	weekly	0	5
	monthly	0	28
	when needed	2	2
3. Why not	not necessary	3	0
	impossible	30	0
4. Communication quality	positive	2	26
	arguments	28	3
	silence	4	1
	good/bad	1	5
	compromise	0	27
5. Discussions	one person	4	6
	never made	28	0
	coercive	3	2
6. Children and decision making	yes	2	27
	no	33	8
7. Quality type of communication	good	0	27
	needs some improv.	0	8
	needs considerable improv.	5	0

(a) by question survey in Appendix B
(b) total responding = 35

The results indicate that parent/child communication at the conclusion of this implementation was more positive and that parents significantly increased their knowledge of parenting.

Unexpected results of this practicum were:

1. Class members requested the development of an advanced parenting class.

2. Parents developed a parent support group.

3. The time alloted to each session was underestimated. Classes could meet for three hours each session. The interest and enthusiasm exhibited by the class members forced most sessions to exceed the two hour limit.

4. The counselors in the three private schools wanted to incorporate sections of this course in their family living portion of their health curriculum.

Conclusion

The results of this practicum indicated that intervention with parents through the use of a parenting class significantly affected the type and level of communication in the participating families. It is important however, to note that the parents in the class were self selected and therefore were motivated to change both their parenting styles and family communication styles.

The course was successful and the participants indicated that they would like to start a "Parenting II" class. The development of a parent support group in which

ten of the families participated was significant and an unanticipated result. As a consequence of this development, a support group session presented guidelines for effective support groups. It is the writer's opinion that this development was crucial for the sustained effect of the parenting class.

Recommendations

The time alloted for each class could be extended to three hours with a break after 90 minutes of the class. Once the participants became comfortable expressing their views and situations, it was found that the alloted two hours went quite fast. Generally the classes did not conclude in less than two and a half hours.

The development of the parent support group appeared to be a logical response to the parenting class. It is suggested that guidelines for such a group should be written into the curriculum of the parenting class.

Plans for Dissemination

The writer plans to present the results of the practicum to the local counselor's association. It is planned to present it at the state meeting of the National Association of Independent Schools. The results of this practicum will also be presented to the local chapter of the American Association for Counseling and Development.

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Parenting Inventory

1. I am familiar with the developmental stages theories of growth and development.

   _____Yes

   _____No

2. If yes, please indicate the theories with which you are familiar.

3. Using logical consequences as a way to deal with misbehavior is:

   _____Agree

   _____Not appropriate

   _____Don't know

4. The most effective way of dealing with the misbehavior of children ages 3-8 is spanking.

   _____Agree

   _____Disagree

   _____Don't know

5. A young adolescent (ages 12-15) is capable of setting behavioral limits.

   _____Agree

   _____Disagree

   _____Don't know

6. Praise and encouragement as parenting techniques can be used only with children eight years and older.

   _____Agree

   _____Disagree

   _____Don't know

7. Peer groups generally have a greater effect on a child's behavior than parents.

_____Agree

_____Disagree

_____Don't know

8. Children need to have limits of behavior clearly defined for them.

_____Agree

_____Disagree

_____Don't know

9. Mutual respect works only with adults, not with children.

_____Agree

_____Disagree

_____Don't know

10. Control issues are a part of every family.

_____Agree

_____Disagree

_____Don't know

11. A person's level of self esteem has a lot to do with what his/her behavior will be.

_____Agree

_____disagree

_____Don't know

SURVEY

Parent/Child Communication

This survey will help us have a better understanding about the frequency and type of communication that occurs in your family. Please respond to the following questions.

1. Do you have family discussions where all members participate?

   _____Yes

   _____No

2. If yes, how often?

   _____Weekly

   _____Monthly

   _____Only when needed (please explain)

3. If no, why not?

   _____Not necessary

   _____Impossible to get participation by family members

4. How would you describe the quality of communication in your family?

   _____Always positive and helpful and issues are usually resolved

   _____Generally end in arguments or disagreements

   _____Generally end in silence

   _____Sometimes good, sometimes bad

5. Discussions generally result in decision-making that is:

   _____A compromise

   _____Made by one person

   _____Never really made

   _____Coercive--no participation in the decision-making process

6. Children are a part of the decision-making process in most cases:

_____Yes

_____No

7. Do you feel that the quality and type of communication that occurs in your family is:

_____Good

_____Needs some improvement

_____Needs considerable improvement

_____Poor, really does not exist

Parent Survey

We are in the process of developing a parenting class and want to have your ideas concerning what you want to discuss. This class will be open to parents of children ages 3-14. Thanks for your time and input.

1. I would like to participate in this class

   _____Yes

   _____No

2. The topics selected should include (please check all that are important to you):

   _____How to deal with inappropriate behavior

   _____The stages of child development

   _____Changes in society and how they relate to parenting in the 1990's

   _____The emotional and psychological needs of parents

   _____Communication with children

   _____Discipline verses punishment

   _____The emotional and psychological needs of children

   _____Peer relationships and peer pressure

   _____Balancing the demands of work and family

   _____Preparing for adolescence

3. Please add any other topics you would like to have covered:

Dear _____

According to our records you have signed up for the Parenting Course which will be starting in September. At present we have eight more participants than we can accomodate. This letter is written to inform you of this and to let you know that a repeat of this course will be given, starting in April, 1990. Please indicate below if you want to defer to the spring class. Please return this to me immediately.

Thankyou for your cooperation

Sincerely

Ruth S. Innes

_____ I am able to defer to Spring 1990

_____ I will defer, but would prefer Fall 1989

_____ I cannot change my plans

Goals

As a member of this class I hope to achieve:

_____ Learn how to parent more effectively

_____ Become a "perfect parent"

_____ Discover why children act as they do

_____ What is effective communication

_____ How to discipline

_____ How not to lose my temper at home

_____ How to like myself as a parent

These are just some possibilities. In the space below list some personal goals that you would like to reach in this class:

Self Esteem Checklist

_____ I am a good person

_____ In order to be valuable I must achieve my goals

_____ All human beings are of value

_____ Sometimes I doubt my self worth

_____ My family could manage without me

_____ I feel the best when people tell me that I have done a good job

_____ When I do not do something as well as I think I should, I disappoint myself

_____ Other people disappoint me and make me feel unimportant at times

_____ I am afraid of not being a good parent

_____ I wonder if my children like me

_____ I know that I am not as good as I used to be

_____ My effectiveness at work is sometimes doubted by me

_____ I feel that I must do things for others in order to be liked

_____ My family will always be there to help me, regardless of what I do

Guide to Perceptions and Feelings

Situations don't cause problems. It is a person's belief about the situation that does. Example: The same wave strikes two children--one thinks it's awful and cries; the other thinks it's great and comes back for more.

The primary correlary to the above: It is the "crazy" beliefs (i.e., those that cannot be empirically demonstrated or logically supported) that cause emotional eipseta.

Four tips for straight thinking-

1. Your self worth does not depend on your performance. Remember, you are just you - a fallible human being-neither good nor bad.

2. Never demand that reality should be different.

3. There are very few situations in this world that are literally catastrophic. However, we suffer dire emotional consequences when we irrationally define certain situations as such.

4. Don't make the mistake of defining wants and desires as dire needs that one must fulfill.